

Message Text

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51
ACTION EA-14

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R 100809Z JUN 74
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3362
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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, AS
SUBJECT: DR. J. F. CAIRNS ELECTED DEPUTY LEADER
OF AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

REF: CANBERRA 3342

1. SUMMARY: AT LABOR CAUCUS MEETING JUNE 10 PRIME MINISTER GOUGH WHITLAM RE-ELECTED AS PARTY LEADER AND WILL SUCCEED HIMSELF AS PRIME MINISTER. CHIEF FEATURE OF MEETING WAS ELECTION OF PROMINENT LEFTIST, DR. J. F. CAIRNS, AS DEPUTY LEADER (AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER) BY VOTE OF 54 TO 42. OUT-GOING GOVERNMENT LEADER IN SENATE, LIONEL MURPHY, RE-ELECTED TO SAME POST BY VOTE OF 55-41. REMAINDER OF MINISTRY TO BE ELECTED TODAY AND TOMORROW, WITH WHITLAM THEN TO DISTRIBUTE PORTFOLIOS AMONG THEM. WHITLAM EVIDENTLY MADE LAST-MINUTE EFFORT TO ENSURE RE-ELECTION OF LANCE BARNARD AS DEPUTY LEADER. ELECTION RESULTS MAY REFLECT NOT SO MUCH DELIBERATE MOVE TO LEFT BY ALP AS RESENTMENT IN CAUCUS AT WHITLAM'S STYLE OF LEADERSHIP, BUT NET RESULT WILL BE CABINET WITH MORE LEFTIST TINGE.
END SUMMARY.

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2. AT MEETING OF AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS JUNE 10 PRIME MINISTER GOUGH WHITLAM ELECTED AS PARTY LEADER AND WILL SUCCEED HIMSELF AS PRIME MINISTER FOLLOWING ELECTIONS OF MAY 18. HOWEVER, CHIEF FEATURE OF FIRST STAGE OF CAUCUS MEETING WAS ELECTION FO DR. J. F. CAIRNS, MINISTER FOR OVERSEAS TRADE IN OUTGOING CABINET, AS DEPUTY LEADER OF ALP, BY VOTE OF 54 TO 42. SENATOR LIONEL MURPHY, GOVERNMENT LEADER IN SENATE, WAS RE-ELECTED TO THAT POST BY VOTE OF 55 TO 41. REMAINING GOVERNMENT LEADERS IN BOTH HOUSES AND LABOR MINISTRY WILL BE ELECTED TODAY AND TOMORROW, AND PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM WILL DISTRIBUTE PORTFOLIOS AMONG MEMBERS OF MINISTRY, THUS FORMING NEW CABINET.

3. VOTING AT CAUCUS MEETING WERE 66 ALP MEMBERS OF NEW HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND 29 ALP MEMBERS OF NEW SENATE. MALCOLM COLSTONG OF QUEENSLAND, WHO MAY BE ELECTED TO SENATE TO RAISE ALP TOTAL IN THAT CHAMBER TO 30, WAS PERMITTED TO VOTE. FINAL SENATE RESULTS NOT EXPECTED FOR ANOTHER WEEK TO 10 DAYS.

4. VOTING HAS GONE AS ORIGINALLY PREDICTED BY NUMBER OF OBSERVORS, THOUGH SEVERAL POLITICAL JOURNALISTS IN PAST FEW DAYS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT CAIRNS DID NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT SUPPORT TO DISPLACE LANCE BARNARD AS DEPUTY LEADER. MEDIA HAVE REPORTED THAT PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM MADE SERIES OF TELEPHONE CALLS OVER PAST WEEKEND TO MEMBERS OF CAUCUS, SEEKING TO ENSURE RE-ELECTION OF BARNARD, HIS LONG-TIME POLITICAL SUPPORTER, AS DEPUTY LEADER. HOWEVER, WHITLAM OBVIOUSLY DID NOT GO ALL THE WAY AND STAKE HIS FUTURE ON ISSUE.

5. ELECTION OF CAIRNS (WHO, BY ESTABLISHED ALP PRACTICE, WILL ALSOBE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND ACTING PRIME MINISTER WHEN WHITLAM IS OUTSIDE OF AUSTRALIA) PROBABLY REFLECTS NUMBER OF FACTORS, INCLUDING FOLLOWING:

(A) LABOR CAUCUS, OVER PAST 17 MONTHS, HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY RESTIVE AT WHITLAM'S IMPERIAL MANNER IN MAKING DECISIONS ON MAJOR ISSUES WITHOUT CONSULTING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIS COLLEAGUES AND THEN PRESENTING THEM WITH ACCOMPLISHED FACT. CAIRNS HAS MADE NO SECRET OF HIS SUPPORT FOR ENHANCED ROLE FOR LABOR CAUCUS IN DECISION-MAKING.

(B) WHITLAM'S LEADERSHIP SYTLE WAS REFLECTED MOST RECENTLY AT MEETING WITH STATE PREMIERS ON JUNE 7, AT WHICH HE ANNOUNCED ILLUSTRATIVE SERIES OF CUTS IN DEFENSE, ROAD, AND AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION WHICH WILL BE

INCORPORATED IN BUDGET TO BE PRESENT TO PARLIAMENT IN SEPTEMBER. WHITLAM ALSO INDICATED NO SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN FUNDS AVAILABLE TO STATES EXCEPT UNDER PROGRAMS APPROVED BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (I.E., BY HIMSELF). ALL STATE PREMIERS, INCLUDING TWO LABOR PREMIERS, ERIC REECE OF TASMANIA AND DON DUNSTAN OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, WERE BITTERLY CRITICAL OF WHITLAM DECISIONS, WITH REECE AND DUNSTAN AT LEAST AS CAUSTIC AS LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PREMIERS. STATE PREMIERS WERE EXPRESSING POINT OF VIEW OF THEIR STATES, RATHER THAN OF THEIR PARTY, AND THEIR REACTION PROBABLY HAD EFFECT (ALTHOUGH DIFFICULT TO MEASURE) IN ELECTION OF CAIRNS AS DEPUTY LEADER.

6. AS IF REFLECTING ABOVE, CAIRNS COMMENTED TO PRESS AFTER ELECTION THAT RESULTS MEAN HE CAN WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY IN FUTURE. HE SAID HE NOW HAS WIDER RESPONSIBILITIES AND HOPES HE WILL BE ACCORDED RIGHT TO SPEAK GENERALLY ABOUT ECONOMIC QUESTIONS BEYOND HIS PORTFOLIO AS MINISTER FOR OVERSEAS TRADE.

7.COMMENT: IDENTITY OF REST OF MINISTRY AND DISTRIBUTION OF PORTFOLIOS WILL PERMIT MORE ACCURATE INTERPRETATION OF SIGNIFICANCE OF CAUCUS MEETING. WHILE CAIRNS HAS LONG BEEN KNOWN AS PROMINENT LEFTIST, RESULTS WERE PROBABLY LESS AN EXPRESSION OF LEFT-RIGHT SPLIT THAN A MORE GENERALIZED DISSATISFACTION WITH STYLE OF WHITLAM'S LEADERSHIP, ALTHOUGH LABOR CAUCUS HAS BEEN MOVED LEFT BY ELECTION. HOWEVER INTERPRETED, RESULTS OF CAUCUS ELECTION APPEAR TO BE A SLAP AT WHITLAM AND AN EXPRESSION OF LONG-ESTABLISHED AUSTRALIAN TENDENCY TO GANG UP AND "CUT DOWN THE TALL POPPY". EMBASSY CONTACTS WITH PRESS AND POLITICIANS JUNE 10 SUGGEST WHITLAM'S ARROGANT ATTITUDE TOWARDS CAUCUS AND STATE PREMIERS CON-

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TRIBUTED TO CAIRNS VICTORY.
GREEN

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Message Attributes

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